

REMARKS

As a preliminary, Applicants and Applicants' representative thank the Examiner for the personal interview which was held on January 26, 2006.

By the present amendment, claim 1 has been amended to recite that the protective film is a transparent protective film and that the roughness does not substantially alter the transparent properties of the protective film. Support for this recitation is found in the original application, in particular on page 16, last full paragraph.

Claims 1-4, 9-10, 17-20, and 22-28 are pending in the application. Claim 1 is the only independent claim.

In the Office Action, claims 1-3, 9-12, 27-28 and 32 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as obvious over WO 00/44841 to Nagahama et al. ("Nagahama") in view of US 5,972,473 to Arakawa ("Arakawa"), and claim 4 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as obvious over Nagahama in view of Arakawa, further in view of US 6,111,699 to Iwata et al. ("Iwata").

Further, in the Advisory Action, it was asserted that "transparency properties are not claimed in the recited invention."

Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections is respectfully requested. Present claim 1 recites a protective film having transparent properties. As discussed at the interview, it is submitted that the Declaration under Rule 1.132 by the inventor Mr. Saiki ("Saiki Declaration") establishes the criticality of the range of 0.03 to 1 microns that does not substantially alter the transparent properties of the protective film.

Specifically, the experimental results reported in the Declaration show that the transparent properties of the protective film having a roughness selected in the range as recited in present

claim 1 are sufficient for visual inspection while still preventing stickiness between optical elements, whereas high roughness values result in degraded transparency properties evidenced by a considerably higher haze value (see Declaration at Table 1 and the graph on Fig. 2).

This result is completely unexpected based on Arakawa, since Arakawa focuses on a protective film and not on optical properties such as transparency, so that Arakawa is completely silent as to the problem of avoiding blocking while enabling visual inspection of optical elements.

In summary, Arakawa fails to teach or suggest an optical member in which a surface of an optical material is bonded to and covered with a transparent protective film having an outer surface roughness Ra of from 0.03 to 1 μm that does not substantially alter the transparent properties of the protective film, wherein the protective film comprises a protective base and an adhesive layer disposed on the protective base so that the protective base can be released together with the adhesive layer from the optical material, as recited in present claim 1. Further, the other cited references fail to remedy this deficiency of Arakawa. Therefore, the present claims are not obvious over the cited references taken alone or in any combination.

In view of the above, it is submitted that the rejection should be withdrawn.

In conclusion, the invention as presently claimed is patentable. It is believed that the claims are in allowable condition and a notice to that effect is earnestly requested.

In the event there is, in the Examiner's opinion, any outstanding issue and such issue may be resolved by means of a telephone interview, the Examiner is respectfully requested to contact the undersigned attorney at the telephone number listed below.

Serial Number: 10/015,991

Group Art Unit: 2872

In the event this paper is not considered to be timely filed, the Applicants hereby petition for an appropriate extension of the response period. Please charge the fee for such extension and any other fees which may be required to our Deposit Account No. 50-2866.

Respectfully submitted,

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